**Group Decision Making**



*image from Microsoft Online Clip Art*

This pattern is concerned with establishing the organization forms for group decision-making. It is a way of helping to implement the patterns of Group DISCUSSION, Collaborative Learning, and JIGSAW.

**Group decision making “is established in an environment where there is a question to solve, a set of possible options, and a set of individuals (experts, judges, etc.), who present their opinions or preferences over the set of possible options” (Herrera et al. 1996 p.73). Group decision-making is a process of brainstorming ideas, collecting these ideas, and then determining the best solution possible for the question at hand.**

Group decision making is seen as superior to individual decision making in that, “groups can represent a larger and more diverse set of perspectives, constituencies, etc.” (Tindale, Kameda & Hinsz 2003 p2). Group members bring a vast array of personal knowledge that can help focus decisions being made by the larger group. Group decision-making, as with negotiation, has the potential to “encourage collaboration, interdependence and purposeful sharing of resources and knowledge” (Hansford, D. & Wylie, A. 2002).

Groups should have a moderator or some sort of facilitator to manage the discussions. A discussion without this role risks having a group with a lack of focus and in return negative results for reaching a group decision.

Groups reach a decision by either unanimously or through an overall consensus in which the majority of the group members agree to the decision (Tindale, Kameda & Hinsz 2003).

Ground rules should be created to address:

* The role of the moderator/facilitator
* The rules of consensus agreement
* Expected behavior of the group members

These ground rules will help to ensure the group members are clear on expectations and the elements of the group decision-making process.

During the decision making process whether face-to-face or virtually or a combination of both, there should be a method of collecting the results of all brainstorming activities and a method of organizing these results as all inputs should be considered valuable to the final outcome.

Based on the results of the brainstorming activities, the group can then make an informed decision either unanimously or by a consensus through negotiations, deductive reasoning, or other decision-making processes.

Once a decision has been reached, a method of reporting the decision out to the respective parties should be completed and executed.

**Therefore, start any group decision-making session by outlining the questions/problems to be solved. Establish the ground rules. Where time is limiting and/or the members of the group are inexperience in making decisions in a group setting, predetermine the group moderator/facilitator and the anticipated time frame for completion. Where time is generous and/or the members of the group are more experienced in making decisions in a group setting, allow the group to self-select a moderator/facilitator and provide a recommendation for the completion time frame. Ensure there is a mechanism in place to capture all data received. To complete a group decision-making session, instruct the group to report on the decisions made and the rationale if appropriate.**

Patterns needed to complete this pattern include MODERATOR/FACILITATOR, BRAINSTORMING, GROUP DISCUSSION, PRESENTATION

Author: Peter LePage

References:

Hansford, D. & Wylie, A. (2002). Description of Applying an online "Jigsaw" collaborative learning strategy in an Education subject. Retrieved April 23, 2011 , from Learning Designs Web site: <http://www.learningdesigns.uow.edu.au/exemplars/info/LD30/index.html>

F. Herrera, E. Herrera-Viedma, J. L. Verdegay, A model of consensus in group decision making under linguistic assessments, Fuzzy Sets and Systems, Volume 78, Issue 1, 26 February 1996, Pages 73-87, ISSN 0165-0114, DOI: 10.1016/0165-0114(95)00107-7.

(<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/B6V05-3VSCR4Y-S/2/ac92a18e563a2b98c3fb8a091c32e0d0>)

Tindale, R. S., Kameda, T., & Hinsz, V. B. (2003). Group decision making. To appear in M. A. Hogg & J. Cooper (Eds.) Sage handbook of social psychology. London: Sage Publications, Inc. (pp 1-66). <http://www.dss.dpem.tuc.gr/pdf/SageGDMchaptfinal.pdf>